

WHAT IS AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING BONUS?

An affordable housing bonus is an increase in the number of housing units or building heights that are currently allowed under a specific zoning regulation, in exchange for building more affordable housing units that help the City and County meet its housing goals.

HASN'T THIS BEEN DONE BEFORE?

Yes. An affordable housing density bonus has been an option for decades. However, in 2015, City and County elected officials adopted a 3:1 program to encourage the development of affordable housing in transit areas. The existing program has not achieved maximum impact over the past two years and Planning staff is now seeking a regulatory update to this program.

WHAT IS THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING BONUS TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

These regulatory bonuses are intended to encourage developers of multi-family housing to include affordable units in projects located close to planned rail stations. These “market-driven” affordable units are most likely to serve low to moderate income households that earn between 60 to 80 percent of Area Median Income.

WHY ARE DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES NEEDED?

Private development projects need to make financial sense, and it can be difficult to balance the costs of land, construction, and financing while still keeping rents within reach. In order to offset the cost of providing a social good (i.e. affordable housing), higher densities and heights are needed.

WHEN CAN THE BONUSES BE USED?

The affordable housing bonus would be available as a “by-right” option to developers of multifamily housing during the site plan process. This means that the developer could forego an often long and expensive rezoning process. While the bonuses are intended as encouragement to incorporate affordable units into housing developments, some will choose to develop what is allowed under current zoning rules.

